

Does Christian Europe's War Prove Christianity a Failure?

What the Religious Press Has to Say Concerning the Organized and Wicked Slaughter That Directly Contraverts All the Teachings of the "Prince of Peace"

THE charge has been made that the outbreak of the vast European conflict proves Christianity to be a failure—in Europe, at least. And one voicing of this charge is found in the article that leads the interesting symposium on this page.

It is, of course, indisputable that Jesus Christ taught peace—"peace on earth, good will to men" is the essence of his doctrine. The nations that are at war are Christian nations which for hundreds of years have listened to the teachings of the Saviour expounded in their churches. They have pious rulers; the Czar invokes Deity and wars in the name of Christ and Holy Russia; the Kaiser reverently announces that Deity is with the Germans and the Kings of England and of Belgium do the same thing.

Yet it is certain that the Saviour abhorred war and preached not only peace, but non-resistance. How can the actions of the Christian countries be reconciled with their profession of Christian faith?

Upon this point the following comments on the war taken from the editorial pages of the leading denominational publications in America are extremely interesting.



Christ on the Battlefield—From the Painting by Henri Dager Which So Forcefully Expresses the Incongruity Between War and All the Teachings of the Saviour.

"FAILURE OF CHRISTIANITY."

The American Hebrew, August 14.

THE London Jewish World dated August 5, just before England declared war against Germany, contained an excellent editorial pointing to the failure of Christianity in the present crisis. The World said:

"As we write the air is burdened with war and the threats of war. Vast armies are mobilizing, marching and counter-marching. The voice of diplomacy is hushed to a whisper almost. And men are asking not whether the crimson tide of slaughter can be stayed, but how much of the world's territory it can be permitted to dye. The 'Armageddon,' so long prophesied, seems at last at hand, and Europe looks as if it would, in the historic phrase, 'tattle into barbarism,' and the sun of civilization set in a sea of blood."

"As we ponder these things we ask ourselves whether we do indeed live under a Christian civilization—under the supreme dispensation of the 'Prince of Peace.' Is this all that two thousand years of Christianity, driven ahead in the teeth of all opposition and over the bodies of countless myriads of martyrs, can accomplish for men? Has this creed, with all the endless misery and suffering that it has entailed, done nothing after all but lead the nations to the brink of spiritual bankruptcy and material ruin?"

"The Christian creed stands confessed to-day before all men as a horrible and ghastly failure. A faith whose cornerstone is brotherly peace but whose priests have blessed the cannon and the battleship and turned a continent into a great camp bristling with steel, was already suspect. But now that nearly all its chief votaries have sprung at one another's throats, and a manifold fury has seized on the Christian hosts, the voice of reason asks: Can this barren creed, the principles of which count for so little in practice, survive the exposure? Has not the world had a surfeit of hollow mockeries? Mockeries, to be sure! The religion whose own adherents turn their cities into shambles is still preached to Jews as the indispensable key to salvation, and rivers of gold are set flowing to accelerate conviction. Do, for God's sake, and the sake of common decency, let us have an end to this intolerable and hateful business. If Christianity cannot guard its own children, let it at least cease to grate to Jews of its spiritual blessings. In the welter of blood and panic let us, for mercy's sake, have done with hypocrisy and keep a clean tongue."

WAR—FOR WHAT?

Christian Herald, Aug. 26, 1914.

IN Europe today seven countries are engaged in bloody warfare.—FOR WHAT? Seventeen million men have been called from their peaceful vocations and are engaged in trying to slaughter one another.—FOR WHAT? Of these seventeen million over thirty thousand have already been murdered.—FOR WHAT?

Wherefore it follows that over thirty thousand wives, mothers and children have been bereaved of husband, son or father.—FOR WHAT?

The patriots of '76 went to war for a principle, the establishing of which had an immediate effect upon their pocketbooks, their pride, and an ultimate result in upbuilding the whole country. When the war in Europe is over every person who survives will be poorer, every moral sense blunted, every sense of justice dulled—the progress of civilization retarded no one knows how many years.—FOR WHAT?

Ask the potentates who sit upon the thrones. Ask the wasters whose personal aggrandizement is being reared upon the grief of the people. Ask the spirit of militarism that bores like a vampire over the uplift of humanity. Ask the diplomats who might have prevented it, but did not. Ask the people themselves in the name of common sense why and for what purpose a crime of such enormity should be permitted.

The present war is one that will make the

whole world think. Those who mock at peace will point to this war as conclusive evidence that peace is a fanatical dream and immeasurably far off. The reverse is true, however, for the war now in progress supplies the strongest argument in favor of peace. It compels men to think of the unspeakable folly of nations which, in all of their best interests, should not be foes but friends and fellow members of a great brotherhood. Yet we find them armed to the teeth by the system, to slay each other.

Further, the war must make the world think of the enormous and needless losses that are inflicted not only on the participants, but on other nations as well, who are not even remotely involved. And all who are not blinded by interest or prejudice must recognize the self-evident truth that rivalry in armament is a constant provocation to war, loss and suffering; that the control of a huge fighting machine by an ambitious or selfish power is a constant peril to humanity, and to the whole world's peace and progress.

Thought is the mother of action. There is strong reason to hope that the cumbersome, costly and wicked system of armaments now prevailing, and which has made the present war possible, may at no distant day, in obedience to the demand of civilization, become a thing of the past. It will not be relinquished without a struggle, but it is a struggle worth making. Russia, the principal aggressor in the present conflict, will not readily give up her dream of Balkan territory and a sea front on the Mediterranean; Austria, France, Germany and England will cling to their old ideals. But world sentiment will triumph in the end. Let the friends of peace take courage.

THE STAKE—CIVILIZATION.

The Independent, August 17.

IN the face of indubitable facts of history, how crass is the contention of those writers who say that the genius for political organization which has created the states of modern Europe is a unique quality of the Teutonic mind! Western civilization, including its political organization, its law, its literature, art and science, is a creation, as the civilizations of Greece and of Rome were creations, of the fortuitous blend of Mediterranean and Celtic, Danubian and Baltic stocks which has been most perfectly achieved in France and the Netherlands, Great Britain and the United States.

It is then no accident, it is the necessary consequence of thousands of years of history that these peoples, and no others, have mastered the problem of the democratic imperium. They alone have seen how to combine political cohesion with popular sovereignty and individual liberty. Greece grappled with this problem, but she was too small and weak and too soon overwhelmed. Rome broadened the foundations of practical experiment by developing law and administration. On these foundations that democratic civilization which is the hope of mankind to-day is built.

This civilization is this hour in peril. It is the stake, the real stake, the only real stake in the awful game of war that is being played.

This is the answer to those writers and apologists who would have us believe that England has done a monstrous thing, has been a traitor to her own race, has raised a fratricidal hand, in casting her lot with France against the militaristic absolutism of the German Government. Whether such writers are ignorant, or intend to deceive, is of little consequence. The thing they say, the thing they write, is not true.

For the German people Americans have only admiration and respect, and no nation on earth will extend to them a readier good will and a more generous co-operation than America shall, when the day comes for them to set about the task of building a republican civilization.

MOCKING OF CHRIST'S SPIRIT.

America (Catholic Review), August 15.

NATIONS, like men, live by ideals. If they be lofty, the nation is noble; if they be base, the nation is base. The reason is clear. Deliberate action follows thought, takes color from thought, is directed by thought. As a nation thinks, so a nation acts. If justice and

charity are in its soul, its acts will be just and charitable. If hatred and greed dominate its spirit, hatred and greed will mark its attitude toward its neighbor. Mammon, not Christ, will be its god. Heaven will be in its wild dreams; the earth in its active life. Trade and conquest will be the be-all and end-all of its existence. It will watch its neighbor's progress with jealous eye, inspect its neighbor's ports, reckon its neighbor's ships, count its neighbor's soldiers, estimate its neighbor's fighting power and at a favorable moment hurl itself at its neighbor in war.

For what? For dress, a temporal advantage. For this, must God's noble creature, man, die a brutal death; for this, too, must widows mourn and children weep—not for high principles but for vile lucre. That is the lesson of a great part of this war. Mammon must be served once again, adorned by the sacrifice of thousands of human lives, propitiated by the wails of women and the tears of children.

The conquering nation will emerge from the war all dripping with blood. It will wash itself clean and pile the gold heaven high. Throughout the world preachers will point a finger of one hand at the glittering mass coined from man's life blood, and lifting their voices will shout: "Behold what the unadorned will do!" A finger of the other hand will be directed to the conquered, despoiled nation, and men will be warned against a religion which has left its adherents in such misery.

God awaits His day. The cannon will not roar forever, the flame will not sound for long. The mocking of Christ's spirit will cease. And then? The judgment.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE SADDLE.

The Christian Advocate, August 6.

THE devil is in the saddle on the other side of the globe, and certain crowned heads are his willing lieutenants.

The civilized world is stunned by the suddenness and the enormity of the international crime and finds it impossible to name any justification for the frightful outbreak.

It must not be overlooked that ever since the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 the nations of Europe have been steadily preparing themselves for a great international conflict. During the last forty years whenever an outbreak has occurred in any part of Europe men have said: "Perhaps this is the hour when the great nations will hurl themselves at one another's throats." There is much psychological weight in the mere fact of keeping such a sentiment in the thought of so many men. Probably few would have predicted a month ago that we were on the verge of this outrageous war, but the conditions were suitable, the temper of European Powers was waiting provocation, the forces were ready, and the world is staggered by the tragic outcome.

The internal irony of the case lies here—that at the very moment when international peace is the uppermost question among civilized nations, in the very week of a Peace Conference was to have met in a central European city, this monstrous iniquity should have sprung upon the world with unrestrained fury. It is a convincing proof that Hague tribunals, palaces of peace and artificial expedients for suppressing war will be of little effect until the political magistrates of the world become actually Christian.

If the crowned heads of Europe who are most responsible for this wickedness were the Christians they fancy themselves to be the peace of the world would not have been broken. May God save the people of Europe and forgive those who are accountable for the deluge of blood which has begun, and speedily bring to naught the machinations of cruel men.

A MONSTROUS GROWTH.

The Churchman, August 15.

THIS monstrous growth of militarism must fall if civilization is to endure. It is falling now, and the more complete and costly its death-throes and the more of dyastic jealousies and "divine" rights it pulls down and

buries with it, the freer will the held be for the growth of a real peace which can only have its roots in the brotherhood of man.

Peace we want, but it must be a peace, not a mere absence of actual hostilities covering a seething depth of suspicion, hatred, envy and fear. If by some miracle the marching hosts could be turned back to-day; if the hunting ships of prey could be drawn home to their own coasts; if the emperors who have claimed divine sanction for their appeals to force could be suddenly brought to countermand their wanton orders for death and destruction, it remains a miserable certainty that the state of armed tension would yet exist, the garrisons on international boundaries would not be reduced, the making of guns and explosives would not cease, the toil of the farmer and the mechanic would still be taxed more and more heavily for the upkeep of these monstrous armies and gold-laden general staffs, and the tension would simply continue to grow—with an added cause of distrust in the recently demonstrated futility of international guarantees or national promises.

As long as any nation or any sovereign in Europe retains the power or the will to devastate an unoffending neighbor, as Germany has done to Belgium, or to plunge a continent into war without warning, as Austria has done to Europe, so long is any peace in the real sense of the word a social impossibility. Peace, yes—but not a peace which bears within its bosom the seeds of perpetual war, whether hidden or open. Peace, again yes—but not a peace which is simply the ingenious balancing on the point of the bayonet a soap-bubble which is bound to burst.

Out of this destruction may yet come forth brotherhood. The people of Germany do not hate the people of France any more than the people of England hate the people of Austria. And perhaps when the princes and the war cabinets and the monster guns and the high-power explosives and the bomb-dropping aeroplanes have thoroughly and absolutely demonstrated their incapacity to preserve peace or to promote international amity the peoples will take the matter into their own hands. Let it be this peace, full, final and fruitful, that we plead for in our prayers, and not that mere mockery of peace which has so long gone by its name.

ALWAYS THE PEOPLE PAY.

The Congregationalist, August 13.

AFTER all the terrible lessons of the ages past, even with the devastated still bleeding Balkans before them, could not the masters of war and emperors who are responsible for this conflict realize that the most precious possessions of any nation are its men, women and children, that the homes are the bulwarks of a nation, that civilization advances only in peace while war destroys their best and breeds barbarism? Have they not learned the blighting curse that comes from race hatred which the spirit of war inflames? But is not war inevitable among those whose chief business is preparation for war if their purposes are ruled by a Napoleonic ambition?

While the war lords sate their lust for power and great domain the people pay the terrible price—always the people pay.

In our horror and dismay that a great war involving all Europe and menacing all the nations of the world, should be begun so ruthlessly, we might despair of the onward course of the Kingdom of Righteousness. But we must not lose our faith in God. Even the blind ambition and brutal warfare of worldly monarchs shall be made to serve God's purposes. The cause of justice and righteousness is coming to its own. In recent years democracy has made steady and rapid progress throughout the world, especially in Europe.

The gospel of democracy, world brotherhood and world peace is proclaimed by the prophets of the twentieth century. The prophet's vision is breaking upon the multitude, upon those who do the world's work and fight the world's battles. They are beginning to realize the price they have to pay for monarchy, the price they have to pay for war. They realize as never before their right and their power to rule

themselves. The war will bring the world near to the downfall of all monarchies. The awful cost of war in life and property, the staggering burden of armaments and war debts will finally force their lesson home. Democracy will sweep away the thrones that once were held in reverence. Peace with its precious fruit will be sought as far better than all the gloom of the blood-drenched battlefields. Then shall see our dreams come true. Justice between nations as now between man and man will be sought and enforced in peaceful tribunals for the whole wide world.

Our own nation occupies remarkable vantage ground in the present crisis. It is highly important that we should maintain our neutrality and perform all possible ministries in the cause of humanity. The steps taken by our government thus far have been wise and right and we may be able to render the most divine service in helping to establish early and righteous peace.

Let us stand, therefore, steadfast and firm in the faith and pray without ceasing that the war may end speedily, and that after the war may come the enduring peace of democratic brotherhood and righteousness.

IS IT ARMAGEDDON?

The Presbyterian, August 5.

THE Book of Revelation describes a battle which is to take place between the king of the earth and of the whole world. It calls this battle Armageddon, a Hebrew name. Civilization is looking now upon one of the greatest, if not the greatest, conflict of the ages as it sways in the balance between returning peace or going forth to carnage. Can this be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Revelation? No one can say. The study of prophecy does not include prediction. God keeps His times and seasons in His own hands. He who undertakes to fix or determine the advent of His own audacity and hardened infidelity. When the promised events come we shall know them, but they shall arrive without warning. Our responsibility is to be ready for them at any time.

The nations have been giving themselves material things, to luxury, to prize-fighting, to all forms of coarse and frivolous pleasure. They have become defiant. They have laughed. The effect of faith has appeared in the church. Most persistent, determined and even boastful effort has been made to teach the all-sufficiency of man.

Mr. Carnegie attempts to buy peace with money, but he has not the price. Only the Prince of Peace can bring peace, and Mr. Carnegie and his followers have no room for him. Mr. Carnegie would snatch education from the hand of the Church and then would change it and use her for the purpose of making war to cease.

The war cry of all Europe has changed a this. The prize-fights cease. The smaller contentions give way; the lines of pleasure are suspended; travel is arrested; the stock exchanges are closed; people tremble, and all interest centres in the portending war cloud.

With war already begun, it will mean the coming of our Lord personally to many a soldier whom he will meet in judgment. It may mean the coming of our Lord in a marked veneration as he came to the Jews in Jerusalem. The unbelief of this age calls for something of this kind. It may mean the great final Second Coming of our Lord, to assert His Kingship and complete His Kingdom. But of this we cannot speak conclusively. But the loud call this hour is the call to repentance, to faith and to obedience. The call should be heard by the Church, for there will the judgment begin. The Church in her faith, her services and her method has suffered large defection.

The world and worldly men have weakened her, and her ambition has been her own glory rather than the praise, worship, obedience and expectation of her King. Whatever may be the outcome and course of the present war, let the Church profit by the grave possibilities, and out of them arise to a more vigorous faith, more definite reliance upon the plan and gospel of Christ and to a more faithful, constant and consistent watching.